A

REVIEW

OF THE

STATE

OF THE

ENGLISH NATION.

Tuesday, June 18. 1706.

IF I ſhould enter upon the Examination of a Cloud of Scandal, vented from the high Church Magazine by their Mouth, the *Rehearſal*, alledging, that in this Paper I write againſt the Duke of *Marlborough* and my Lord Treaſurer; I ſhould ſeem to put too much value upon the ridiculous Sophiſms of the Party, who now ſet up to prove the Whigs Enemies to the preſent Government. — I have often deſir'd that Author to prove ſome of his Aſſertions, before he goes on with more,—and I ſhall repeat a few, which when he will anſwer, I'll promiſe to clear this Paper from having the leaſt Reflection in it, or in its Deſign, upon the Duke of *Marlborough*.

1. If Kings are veſted with their Authority *Jure Divino*, as he has often aſſerted, inherent in the Race or Line, what Title the QUEEN has to the Crown of *England*?
2. To what End he can argue for the ſacred Right of Succeſſion, but to invalidate the Title of the QUEEN?
3. How he makes it out, that Whigs and Rebels are the ſame things?
4. How he will prove, a Whig wrote the *Memorial* by way of Irony?

Theſe are Queries I have frequently put to him, and which he never attempts to reply to, and which till he does, I have promiſed him never to anſwer his ſubſequent Cavils, as not worth any Man's Notice.

But that I may clear up the Whigs from being Enemies to the Duke of *Marlborough*, and particularly this Paper; I ſhall examine a little, who are moſt likely to be Enemies to the Duke and the Government; thoſe that rejoyce

joyce with him at the mighty Succeſſes, with which Heaven bleſſes his Grace's Endeavours to redeem us from Tyranny, and *Jure Divino* Doctrines, or thoſe that repine at them.

And let Mr. *Rehearſer* be blam'd, if this forces me to reveal ſome Follies of his Party, which otherwiſe would have been conceal'd; for I delight not to tell him, that the High-flying Gentlemen, as well Clergy as others, have not ſtuck to expreſs their exceeding Regret, even at this Victory, which nothing of a true Lover of *England*, and the Proteſtant Religion, can forbear rejoycing at.

I told him a Story in my laſt from *Coventry*, of a Clergy-man, who learnedly diſtinguiſh'd of this Matter, and ſaid, it was good News for the Nation, but not for the Church.—Good God! what Church is it we have among us, to whom it is not good, that the *French* Power ſhould be broken.—Another Clergy-man in *London* was heard, on the firſt Arrival of the great News from *Barcelona* in a Paſſion of Concern, to ſwear by his Maker, we are all undone; are theſe the Gentlemen, on whom when I reflect, Mr. *Leſly* will have me mean the whole Church? No, no Mr. *Rehearſal*, there is in plain *Engliſh* an unhappy Defection in the Inferiour Clergy, and too many are debauch'd with High Church, and *French* Principles, which I take to be the ſame things; but this is the Misfortune, not the Conſtitution of the Church; 'tis her Diſeaſe, ſhe labours under it, and I doubt not, will by the help of Victory and the Duke of *Marlborough*, be in Time cur'd of it.

I ſhall now give him a remarkable and known Hiſtory of High Church Temper, as to the late Victory, as a Teſtimony to the World, who are Enemies to the Government, and the Duke, the High Church, or the Whigs; and becauſe, I will not be charg'd with Forgery, I ſhall take the Freedom to name Perſons, Places and Records, let him confute me if he can?

There has been a remarkable Conteſt in the Town of *Taunton* in *Somerſetſhire*, about the chooſing Church-wardens for this laſt Year for the Pariſh of *Taunton* St. *Mary's*, in which not the Juſtice of the Cauſe only, but the Strength of Parties, *in which that Town, as well as all* England, *is moſt unhappily divided*, has been fully try'd, and the High Church Gentlemen have had the Mortification to ſee their Illegal and Arbitrary Proceedings condemn'd in an open Court of Juſtice, and the People of *Taunton* reſtor'd to their undoubted Right; *The Caſe in ſhort was thus.*

The Office of Church-warden is a place of ſo much Trouble and Charge, and if honeſtly executed of ſo little Advantage, that few People are ſolicitous to be nam'd to the Employment; but two things made the Caſe differ in *Taunton*, which may perhaps be uſeful to obſerve in other Places, and is therefore touch'd at here.

The Office had been diligently engroſs'd by the Party for ſeveral Years paſt, in which time ſeveral Irregularities had been committed, unneceſſary Charges brought on the Pariſh, Accounts clandeſtinely paſt, the Pariſh Church damnified, and almoſt thrown down, and abundance of unwarrantable Practices made uſe of; of which the Pariſhoners could have no ſatisfactory Account. Theſe things cauſed a great Struggle in the Town at the laſt Election of Church wardens, the one ſide for keeping the Power in their Hands, and the other for getting Men in they could be better ſatisfy'd with.

The Election was at *Eaſter* 1705,—when Mr. *Gale* Miniſter of the Pariſh, claim'd a Right of naming one Church-warden by Vertue of the Cannon Law, *which as it afterwards appear'd*, does give the Miniſter the Right of naming one, where it is not otherwiſe determin'd by the Cuſtom and Uſage of the Place,—Now it was plain, it had been otherwiſe determin'd here by the antient Uſage of the Place; however Mr. *Gale* inſiſted upon his Claim, and accordingly nam'd one *F... is Oſmonton* to be one of the Church-wardens, and the Party ſet up two more, *viz. Tho. Hasket* an Attorney, and *Simon Weſtcot* an Apothecary. The Majority of the Pariſhoners choſe Mr. *Francis Newton*, *Arthur Towil*, and *Tho. Parſons*, the laſt were fairly choſen by an open Poll, Proclamation made, mutually cloſed and determin'd, and no body could imagine any In-

Interruption could be given, till High Church Authority comes to interpose; and by this, the Suffrage of the Parishoners was actually destroy'd, Liberty of Election dissolv'd, Majority contemn'd, and the Minor set up in Defiance of Justice.

It is the Custom of *Taunton*, that the Chancellor of the Dioceſs of *Bath* and *Wells* admits and swears the Church-wardens, when chosen by the People; and accordingly Mr. *Newton*, Mr. *Towil*, and Mr. *Parsons* were presented to the Chancellor to be sworn; but in short, he was pleased, without any Reasons given, to refuse them; and tho' a *Mandamus*, and an *alias Mandamus* was sued out and serv'd upon him, he still persisted in his Refusal; at last he considered of it, and admitted one of the three, *viz.* Mr. *Towil*, but refuses the two other; and in their Room, of his own absolute Authority and meer High Church Pleasure, admits and swears two of the other, *viz.* Mr. *Wescot* and Mr. *Osmonton*, who had no manner of Pretence to an Election.

This Treatment brings the honest Parishoners to seek their Remedy at Law; and accordingly Mr. *Newton*, and Mr. *Parsons* bring their Actions against *William Hughes* Esq; Vicar General, and principal Official, *as he stiles himself*, of the Bishop of *Bath* and *Wells*, for swearing the usurping Church-wardens, without being legally chosen, and also against the Minister.

'Tis strange these Gentlemen should not know, that the Reign of Her present Majesty is remarkable, for the Impartial Unbyast Currency of the Laws, and that Oppressions of all sorts, are not only discourag'd by Her Majesty's Royal Example; but that those, who being Oppress'd, either by Church or Party-Tyranny, are sure of Redress, if they apply for it were the Law directs?

Had they Reflected on this, they would not only have desisted their Irregularities, and forborn Imposing on their Neighbours, but much less would they have stood the Tryal of the Law, and ventur'd to appear in a Court of Justice, in a Cause of which they knew they must have Reason to be Asham'd.

Had they Examin'd but the good Success of the Mayor of *Norwich*, in Swearing an Alderman that was never Chosen, and making double Returns for Members of Parliament, they would have blush'd if so much Grace is not deny'd them, to have been seen in a thing, equally Arbitrary, equally Scandalous, and equally Meriting Reproof.

It is enough to tell the World, they were shamefully cast in both Actions, at *Westminster-Hall* this very Term; and sent down to learn more Wit, having been told from the Bench, they had not Mathematical Heads, and now they may pay their Charges if they can out of the Parish Money—— And if they will accept of my Advice, it should be to behave themselves so for the future, that their Neighbours may not think them unfit to be trusted with the Parish-Stock; the best Method for which, is to give a good Account of what they have been trusted with already.

Thus much for their Mortifying Election, I come now to what more particularly concerns the present Case; *viz.* Their Behaviour; as to the Publick of which, this is the Abract.

The Confirmation of the Famous Victory at *Ramellies*, and the taking of *Brussels*, *Ghent*, *Bruges*, *&c.* happen'd to come to *Taunton*, both on the same Day, *viz.* Thursday, *May* 24.

The Whigs, *as they do Universally*, Expresst the greatest Surprize of Joy possible, at such a Flux of welcome News; and to Express their Loyalty, several of them went, tho' late at Night, to Mr. *Thomas Gale*, the Mayor of the Town, to have the Bells rung; it is to be Noted they did not go to him as Mayor, but as he is also Church-Warden of *Taunton St. Marys*, applying themselves at the same time to Mr. *Butler*; another of the Church-wardens, for Liberty to ring, but were peremptorily deny'd by both,—several Arguments were us'd to perswade, and particularly the Dissenters of the Town had taken the Charge upon them, and sent Money for the Ringers; at last about Midnight, they were prevail'd with to let them ring, tho' much against their Wills, as appear'd; for the next day

Mr.

Mr. *Mayor*, and Mr. *Symon Westcot* declar'd, they had rather have given 5 Guineas, than the Bells should have been rung.

On the 1*st* of *June*, the News came of the raising the Siege of *Barcelona*, and these Gentlemen being then desir'd again to let the Bells be rung, absolutely refus'd it, and there was no ringing at all in that Church.

At the other Parish, *viz*. *Of Taunton St. James*, several of the Parish had obtain'd the Key of the Bellfry, and began to ring; but they had not been long at it, but one of the Church-wardens, the first Letter of whose Name is Mr. *Slape*, and one Mr. *Yard*, a Shoe-maker, and Deputy Vice Admiral of the County, ran to the Steeple, fell foul on the Ringers, beat and abused them, and drove them down Stairs.

I forbear to repeat some of their disloyal and scandalous Expressions upon this occasion, because perhaps it might expose them to the Resentment of the Government; but I cannot omit one thing, that the Sextons Wife of St. *James* Parish having honestly and innocently let the Ringers into the Bellfrey, little thinking it could be an Offence to have the Bells rung for beating the *French*, they turn'd the poor Man out of his Place of Sexton, to the Ruin of his Family, and put another in his Room.

Nor was this all. But some honest Whigs being resolv'd *Taunton* should not be silent, when all the Nation rejoyc'd, got together to make a Bonfire in the Market-place.

The Wood was no sooner put together, and the Pile made up, but the Party in a great Rage gather'd together to pull it down, and Mr. *Yard* in particular cry'd out, *They would not have the Church burnt upon the Corn Hill*, Mr. *Mayor* being also of the same Rank, sent to take the Names of the People concern'd in it, threatning to indict them for a Riot; tho' I suppose he will consider of it, and remember his Brother the Mayor of *Norwich* before he attempts it.

Indeed it is worth note, that these Gentlemen did not think fit to execute their Design of pulling down the Bonfire, or putting it out; for I have always observ'd of this high Party, *they were ever better at swearing than fighting*; the Bonfire was lighted, the Wood was burnt, the People rejoyc'd, and the Church had no Damage; except when Mr. *Yard* was Church-warden, and pull'd down the Pulpit, and so undermin'd two of the Pillars, that they fell down, and a great Part of the Church with them, and put the Town to 600 *l*. Charge to build it up again.

Upon these Proceedings, I would gladly refer it to Mr. *Rehearsal*, or indeed to any body else to determine, which of these Sort of People are the greatest Friends to the QUEEN, the Ministry, or the Duke of *Marlborough*; those that rejoyce at the great Successes he gains, and the Prosperity of the publick Affairs; those that ring the Bells, and sent a Guinea to the Ringers; or those that had rather have given 5 Guineas, than they should have rung at all? whether are most likely to burn the Church, they that make Bonfires for Victory over a Popish Army; or those that would have the Rejoicers indicted for a Riot?

And whenever for the future, it remains a Doubt; who are the Friends of the present Government, and the Duke of *Marlborough*; let them go to *Taunton* for their Instruction.

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